

The SL Arts and Life Magazine

ReZ

August 2014

Le Cirque de Nuit

with Jami Mills

The Beginning of Life

by Sedona Mills

Key to Golden Hills

Augenblick & Tamatzui



The End
by Art Blue

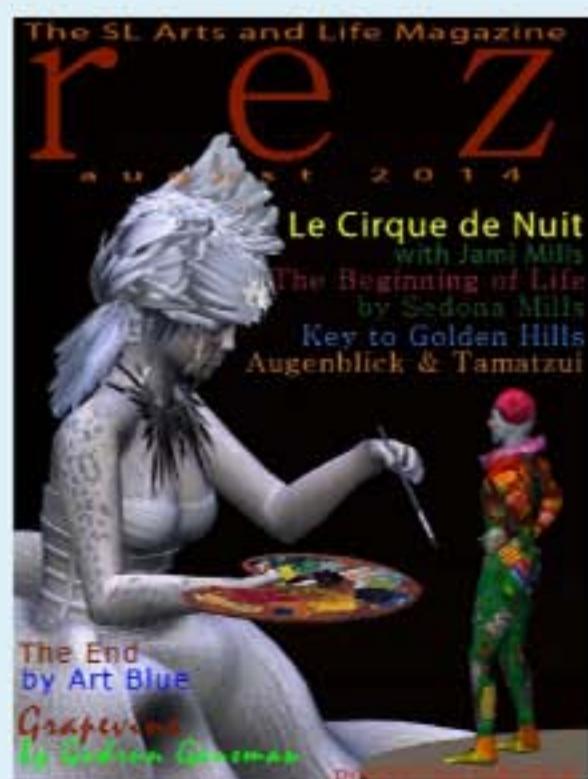
Grapevine
by Gudrun Gausman

poetry/microfiction

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- **The End** Art Blue explores the end of a world and gives his perspective on what is lost and what is gained.
- **The Beginning of Life: Awakening** Sedona Mills brings us a fresh chapter from her exciting story about the future and our virtual existence within it.
- **The Key to Golden Hills: Return** Stihly Augenblick and Hitomi Tamatzui return with another noir page turner, leading us up to next month's exciting finale.
- **I Heard It Through the Grapevine** Gudrun Gausman answers what she can about the new SL 2.0.
- **Go World!** An absolutely stunning poem by our regular contributor, Zymony Guyot, who makes us consider which things are really meaningful in this troubled world.
- **Sand** Our own Crap Mariner goes out of character for a moment and brings us a touching story, told in 100 words, about dreams and love.

About the Cover: Gamma Infinity has created one of the most beautiful images we've seen in SL, one of the interstitial "color wash" scenes during Idle Rogue's groundbreaking production of "Le Cirque de Nuit, featured this month, along with some lovely images by Jami Mills





Idle Rogue

Productions

Bowie Bravin Live

The Eden House in Second Life

The Beautiful Freaks Burlesque Circus

Idle Rogue Live

M² Concert for [PIAS] UK

Bowie Bravin vs The Beautiful Freaks

DeepSky Timeless and The Pale Hypnotic

London Online

Children Of A Factory Nation (Jordan Reyne) Album Launch

Time - The Benefit For Guardian Spirit

Guerilla Burlesque

Burn2 Roguery

Le Cirque de Nuit

... Mayfair

Le Cirque

text and photograph

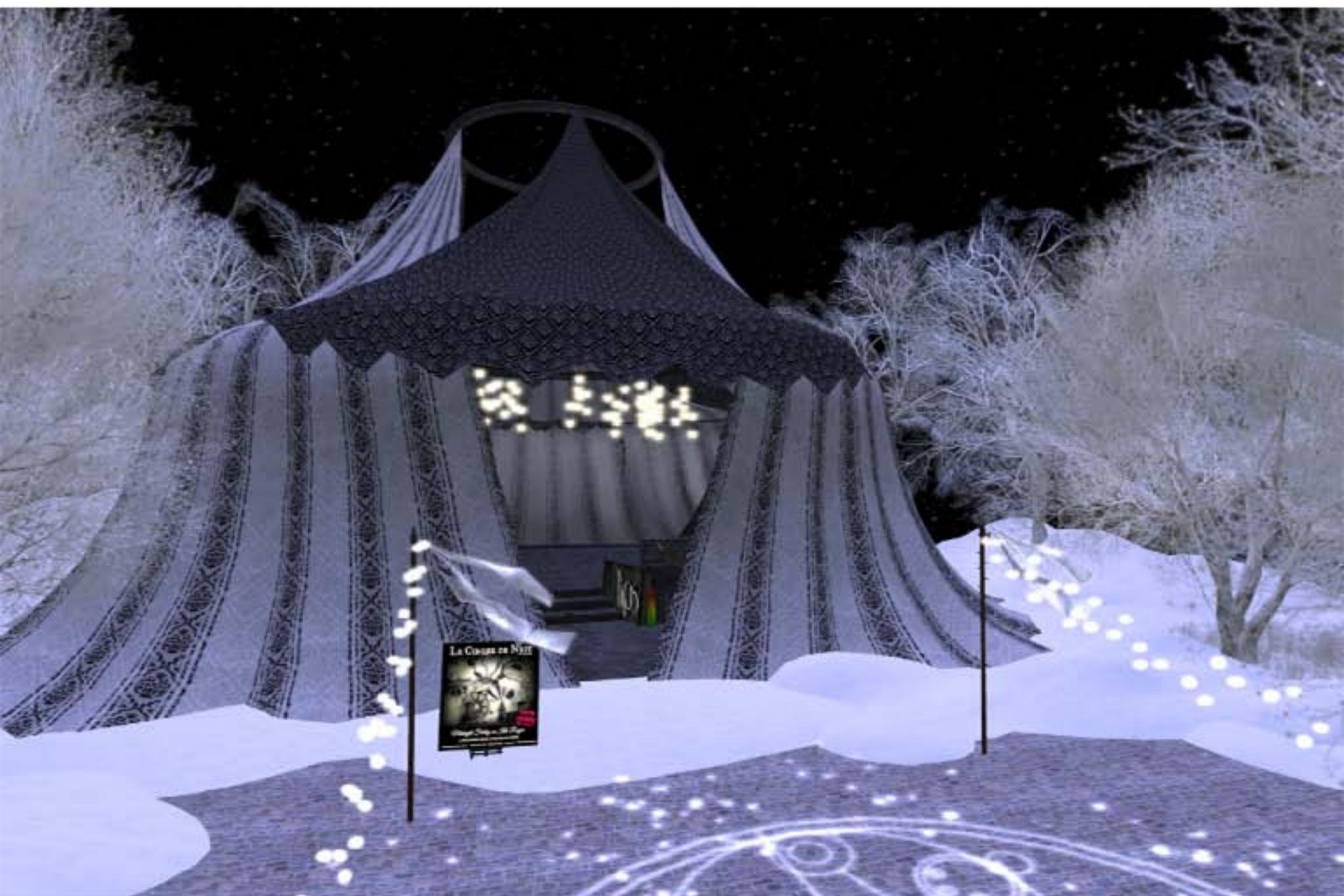


e de Nuit

phy by Jami Mills

It's 1:30 a.m. and I can't sleep. Most people would be none too pleased by that, but I couldn't be happier. And it doesn't look like I'll be getting to sleep anytime soon either, because a dizzying array of fantastical and sumptuous images continues to prance around in my head. Crazy-weird images -- the sorts of things I imagine inhabit the psychotic mind. Magical things.

fiendish grin, stands atop a large antique pipe organ. Two men, with blasé expressions and legs akimbo, dangle from his strings. Beautiful girls in burlesque attire ride bareback on oversized elephants. A gorgeous, elven woman, replete with piercings, studs and other frightening hardware, contorts her body into impossible shapes. Jugglers -- trapeze artists. I'm pretty sure I'm not dreaming, although the sequences re-



A gigantic, deranged puppeteer (who reminds me not a little of our own Crap Mariner), with dark glasses and a

playing in my mind have that same ethereal, incongruous rhythm.



chryblnd admiring her adoring audience

Not one word of complaint from me, though, for you see, I've just seen one of the most fabulous performances Second Life has offered in recent memory. I'm speaking, of course, about the stylish, fantastic, sometimes macabre but always transfixing, *Le Cirque de Nuit*, produced and directed by chryblnd Scribe, an Aussie lass and owner of *Idle Rogue*.

“The circus arrives without warning. No announcements precede it. It is simply there, when yesterday it was not.”

This is a passage from the novel *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern, the inspiration for *Le Cirque de Nuit*. The themes of magic and its Victorian set-

ting spoke so strongly to chryblnd Scribe that she started seeing the possibilities for an immersive show in Second Life. It would be a lush, visually dazzling production, with a similar steampunk sensibility, mixed with magical realism. In short, she began to imagine *Le Cirque de Nuit*.

Chryblnd is no stranger to entertainment in SL, teaming up with Gloriana Maertens and a cadre of very talented and seductive dancers on the hugely popular *Guerilla Burlesque* dance troupe, a live theatrical revue at chryblnd's sim, *Idle Rogue*, at the witching hour of midnight (SLT) every Friday. chryblnd takes *Le Cirque* to a completely different level, though. The scope of this ambitious production is staggering.



an empty house at Idle Rogue....5 minutes later, you couldn't get in

We have RL's *Cirque du Soleil* to thank for helping us all re-think the circus. But *Le Cirque de Nuit* takes the circus even further, into the realm of pure magic, which suits an SL production to a tee, with all of its motion capture technology and graphics possibilities.

The cast includes 36 members from all over the globe, including the U.S., Australia and Japan. A logistical nightmare, right? Talk about herding cats. (In fact, there are two outrageous felines with Don King hair in the show, and they both have that mischievous look in their eyes, as if saying, "You're joking, yes? You expect me to follow

directions?"

Le Cirque is by no means a one-woman show. Gloriana Maertens does the production design, Blaze deVivre is the Production Consultant, Arrehn Oberlander is the Technical Director, and countless others have contributed their blood, sweat and tears to create this impressive show.

Like *Guerilla Burlesque*, seating is limited for *Le Cirque*, and it's first-come, first-served. But to put this in perspective, let me tell you what a hot ticket it is. I tried to see a performance last spring and arrived an hour before show





photo contributed by chryblnd Scribe





time. Silly me. Way too late! Sim's full. For the show on July 25, the doors opened about an hour and a half before show time and it was quickly filled. (I had inside help: Media Liaison, Aubreya Joszpe, took me under her wing and made sure I could get a seat.) People were incredulous when they arrived a full hour before the event and were turned away. Scores of people were ranting. Tell me about it. I've been there. I feel your pain. But it's **that** popular of a show.

I've never seen such excitement and anticipation. I asked whether *Idle Rogue* would ever consider following the model that *Basilique Performing Arts Company* used with *Paradise Lost*, where tickets for reserved seating were sold. I was told that *Le Cirque* will always be a free performance. So, be forewarned: arrive early, bring a snack and some reading material, and camp out until show time. Oh, and pray you don't crash!





More people need access to this show. But how? Aubreya mentioned that a live feed might be possible. Isn't this what saved opera at NYC's *Met*, with its live, high-definition feeds streaming to theaters around the globe? All I know is more people need to be welcomed under the big top.

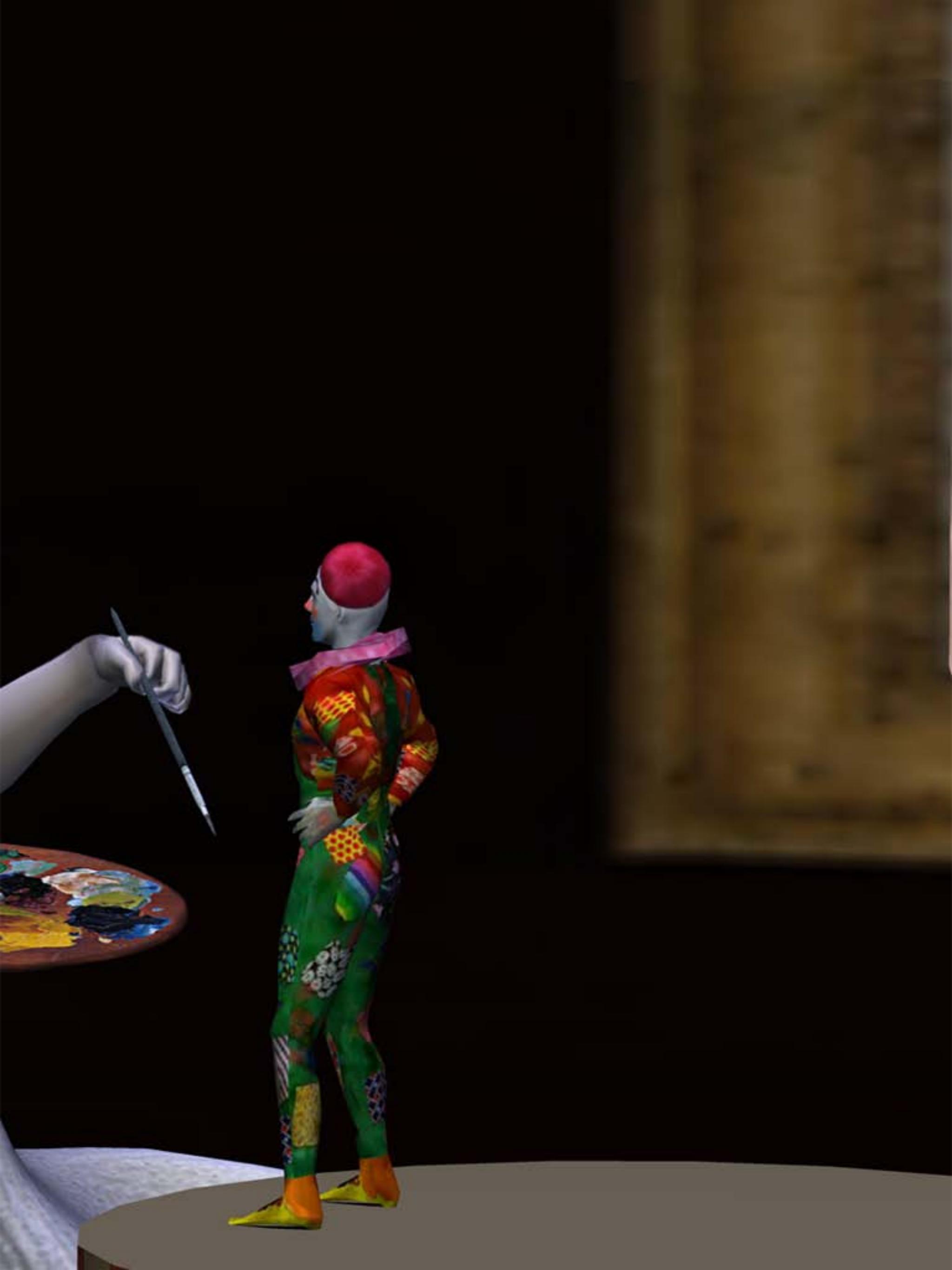
The show is performed largely in black and white which, when done properly, can be highly dramatic. And *Le Cirque* does it right: intricate sets; moving steampunk gears; ballerinas dancing against a Tim Burtonesque backdrop. Then comes the pallet cleanser, something they call "interstitial scenes" or "color wash sets," scenes positively

swimming in vibrant colors that appear between the main set changes. They are like a burst of flavor on your mind's tongue. (Gamma Infinity created one of the most brilliant of these. I've reproduced it here again because, well, I'm just in love with the image.) Then, with brain thoroughly bathed in the full spectrum of color, it's back to black and white. It's a fascinating conceit, and one that works magnificently.

What is so impressive about *Le Cirque* is the unbridled passion of the creators and the players -- it comes through in each scene. It's what drives the production. When we were children going to our first circus, we had that wide-eyed wonder at the spectacle of it all. Jug-







glers and acrobats, dancers and wild animals. The circus was larger than life. Our mouths gaped open. Well, wide eyes and gaping mouths were everywhere in the audience. Its “bravos” and wild clapping ended each scene. How marvelous it must be for the troupe to feel such unbridled appreciation. It was electric.

lify the other-worldliness of the unfolding stories. Is this really happening? Am I really here? Particularly compelling is the music box keyboards accompanying the ballerinas - - as if they, themselves, were mechanically twirling in a tight circle atop the glass box.

And the steampunk touches pay tribute to the Victorian theme of the source



And the music is inspired! The soundtrack for *Le Cirque* is dark, brooding, energetic, crazed, its dream-like qualities being the perfect counterpoint to the mystical action. Its rhythms and distorted harmonies amp-

material. Spinning gears seem to animate all of the action, as if some *deus ex machina* were at work behind a hidden curtain. Like dreams, where we never question even the most implausible scenarios, people float above the stage -



- time and space are distorted.

And the sets are an outrageous mix of sheer exuberance. People poured their hearts into this show and the passion is evident in every detail. Some secrets revealed, others kept. Magic is everywhere. Welcome to *Le Cirque de Nuit*.

And as if we weren't lucky enough to score a ticket to this "must see" event, the creator, crhyblnd Scribe, made herself available for some insights into the production.

*JM: Thank you for a sublime and provocative entertainment spectacle! And thank you for taking time from your manic schedule. I know you're being pulled in so many different directions right now. One question I know our readers want to know is whether they'll have another opportunity to see *Le Cirque de Nuit*. How many more performances do you envision and when do you think will be *Le Cirque's* final performance?*

CS: We always envisaged performing it

through 2014, and in fact, originally we intended to have a "rolling" cast so that it could be performed with some predictability (as far as performance times go). In the event, however, we still like the show in its current form so much, we want to keep performing it as it is. So the answer is, yes, there will be more opportunities to see it. Certainly, we are trying for dates in September and I would very much like a small run over the holiday period or in December sometime. Will it have a final performance? I do not know. I like the idea of evolving it, but I also like a finish line. I would consider an annual, auditioned event, too, but I very much admire the people I am currently collaborating with. So there will be more. At least for a time :-) (joining idle rogue inworld group or subscribing is an excellent way to get this news)

JM: I understand that you have 36 players. To say the least, the logistics of assembling talent from all parts of the globe, from five different time zones, is mind-boggling. Now I understand why Le Cirque isn't being performed nightly (or even weekly). How can you manage so many disparate schedules? It seems like an impossible task.

CS: I think anyone working collaboratively in SL quickly learns to master time, to a certain extent. We are a global platform. Any worthy venture is naturally going to attract people from every time zone, and if you want that kind of cultural diversity - - which I very much do want - - you learn to keep time "on the go." I have four clocks on my PC desktop, but I find I rarely use them now. What's harder is



scheduling around such things as religious and state holidays, many a *Cirque* date has been dashed on the rocks of special RL events I never knew existed!

JM: Do you have any particular concerns about the future of SL (specifically, SL 2.0)?

CS: My only reservation is that I want 2.0 to have ground level creative tools, accessible to anyone with an inclination to learn, just as we have now. I believe this is key to Second Life. I did not believe I had a creative side at all when I came to SL. Can't draw, or paint, can't play an instrument; I just knew what I liked. It's been one of the most life-changing experiences I can imagine to learn that I can make things. For me, the SL communities I am involved with are made up of creative people and the people who enjoy supporting them. Some do, and some watch, and in that transaction is the key to this environment.

JM: What are your thoughts about the future of digital art in RL generally?

CS: I fully believe, and have always believed, that one of the most important ways the two realities will come to blend together is through art and creat-



photo contributed by chryblnd Scribe

ive expression. I believe technology like *Oculus Rift*, which will heighten the sense of immersion into digital worlds, can gain mainstream acceptance and open up completely unexplored worlds of interaction for the human race, no less. And I hope there are health care professionals in place to help us transition, because I believe that will be necessary.

JM: Tell me a little something about



Mayfair, Idle Rogue's next production based on the Mayfair witches. I understand that you're about to begin casting and expect to open this new show sometime this fall.

CS: Mayfair is based on characters in Anne Rice's novel, *The Witching Hour*, the story of a dynasty of witches and their struggles with an immortal being who is the source of both success and tragedy in their lives. Their story is the line of succession from the late 1600s to the late 1900s, it spans some great eras and it's the story of strong, sexy

women (and men) at the height of their powers. I've always been a fan of the novel (not so much the series, sadly). Similarly to *The Night Circus* (from which *Le Cirque de Nuit* drew its inspiration), the author creates a vibrant, evocative environment. At this stage, we are slightly delayed in our usual process, but I am hoping to put a little witchery into Halloween.

JM: After Mayfair, what then? What sorts of projects do you think lend themselves to what Idle Rogue does best?

CS: I honestly don't know, 'til my muse shakes me awake in the middle of some night in the not-too-distant future. Lately, I've spent a lot of time in musical genres that are new to me - psytrance, chill, psybient, dub, drum and bass. I am struck by how stimulating they are; they're a kind of brain food, to me. So I am thinking something in that genre, just



because they actually take you into a headspace you don't normally move around in. My partner and I share a strong interest in environmental issues, so that's definitely in the mix, too. If there's one common thread to *Idle Rogue Productions*, it is immersion. From the very beginning, I have gone after the essence of hyper-realism as it applies to Second Life entertainment. We started out making rock festivals like real rock festivals, then concerts that felt like real concerts. The dance shows have the same aim -- the com-

mon goal is to provide audiences with a top quality, seamless and tight production that leaves them feeling like they went to a "real" show.

Well, "real" or not, *Le Cirque de Nuit* is one helluva ride. Magic? Check. Spectacle? Check. Entertainment? OMG.

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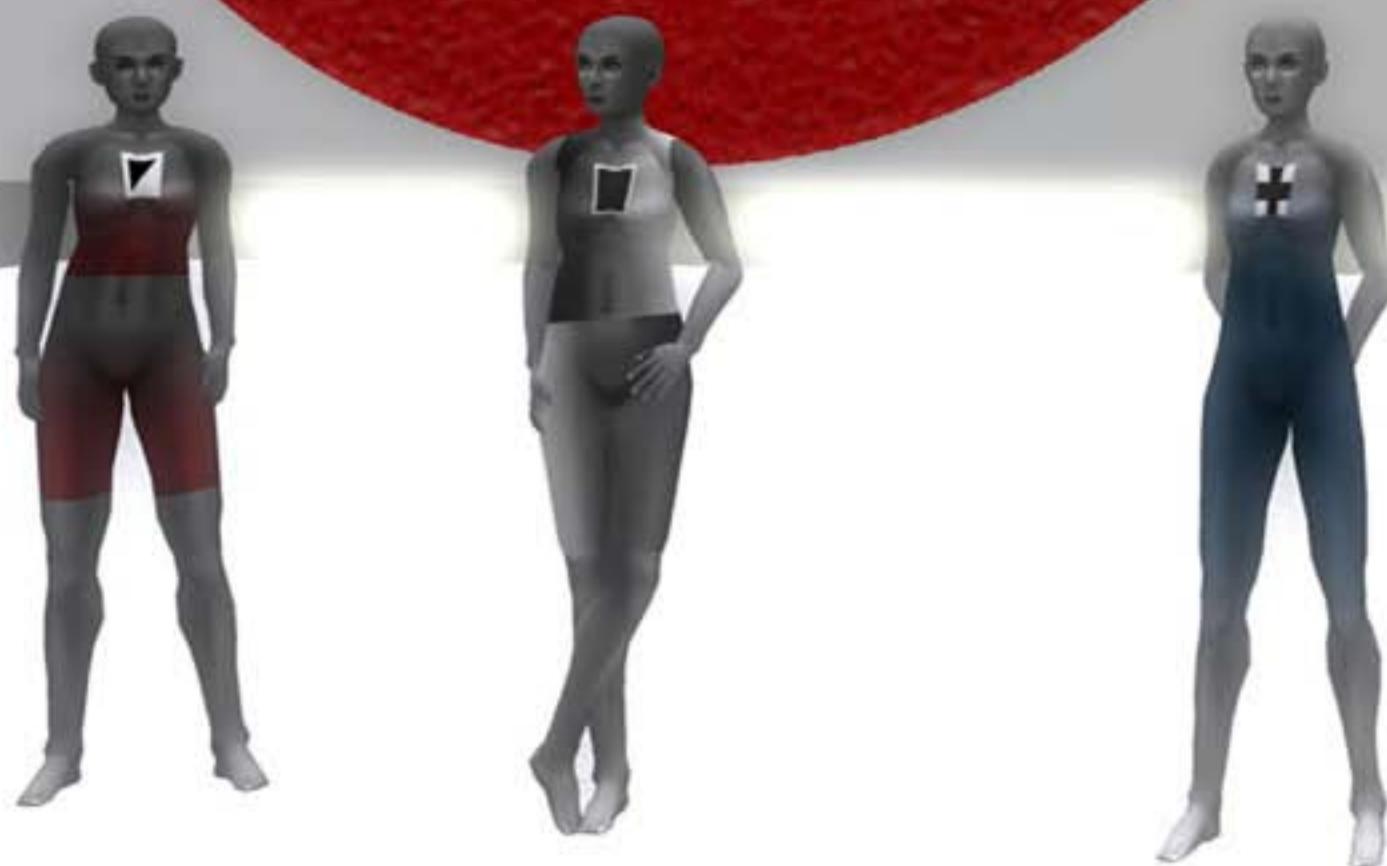
photograph

jami mills



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The End: This World Co



Counting Down



by Art Blue

“... they had their faces twisted toward their haunches and found it necessary to walk backward, because they could not see ahead of them. and since he wanted so to see ahead, he looks behind and walks a backward path ...”

Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto XX, lines 13–15 and 38–39, translation by Mandelbaum.

I found a story in the news about *The End*, with the headline “End Date Set.” The story was about a world. Worlds come and go, as we all know. But this headline was not about just any world; it was about the world I am now in -- and I love this world. On femtospeed, there would be only days or weeks left. I want to stay as long as I’m allowed. So, I set myself on slow-motion, on the speed this world is using. I call it “chat-speed.” This way, I can enjoy the stories to the fullest, and also have time to dream. I join the weekly talks at *Basilique* chat salons to hear more about *The End*. Many inhabitants say nothing can be done due to the TOS -- whatever this means -- and let their tears stream. Some say they are just visitors and go dancing, not caring much if they lose the clothes they bought. There will be a new world for a fresh start on voice-speed. They call it 2.0. When something doesn’t go on along with the change of life, the next attempt seems to get a 2.0 mark, while the old code gets rubbish. Maybe

voice-speed is the next level for them?

What about all the art when this world collides, you may ask? Do we need to leave it behind, to burn it down to keep the continuum untouched and stable? No! Art is the exemption; pieces of art are allowed to be transferred. Even big ones. You think of the Coliseum, mentioned in *The Artefact*? Yes, but this was stolen, stolen by the “still not known one.” You, dear reader, might know big pieces of art in old Egypt -- all stolen! I’m sure you were born after 2,000 BC, in case you still use this notation, so you shall know some of them. It’s not so difficult to understand how world artificers like Zeus or Zuse act.



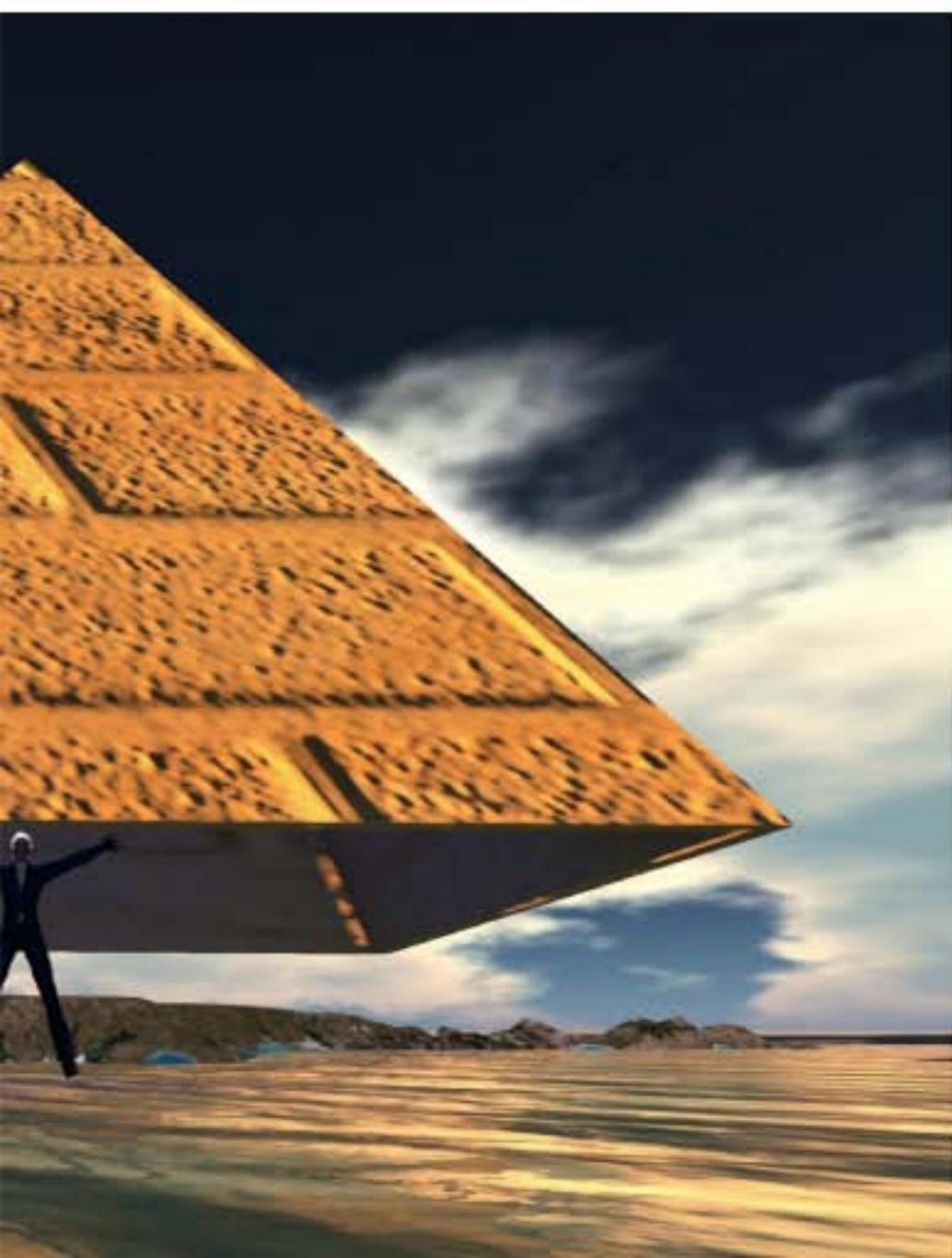
They like to leave traces behind. It's easy to decode them when you see the obvious, and you're ready to accept the truth. It was just not possible at these times to build such pyramids without the zero gravity technology we've mastered even in this low-developed world I'm in now. Don't misunderstand me. I'd never discriminate against life based on low-level technology. This world I'm in now is good for learning some tricks for the next level. I love this world on chat-speed, as it has generated some fantastic retro-art that would otherwise have gone forgotten.

I show you some pieces made by famous artists, all invited by Peter Green-

away, the director of many well known movies, but also of one of my favourite ones, *Prospero's Books*. The editor of *rez Magazine* may credit the artists in pixel mode. I don't want to do this in text mode as this would be too easy for a later back-trace. As a consequence, this article may be flagged and no longer exist. When I fail in my mission, and there is quite a chance of that, nothing of this world will be kept alive in other computer worlds. Not all of the artists I selected exist in other grids, so we're not on the safe side by making some copies. I know it might seem to you that I've a persecution complex. All I can say is please bear with me, as I know the truth.

Some readers may say there shall be no end as we are in a simulator. And it's forbidden to end a world, as this kills life. I must remind you of the basics outlined in *The Artefact*. There are sponsors. Worlds are made for sponsors. I've never given them a name, as they chose one during transition. But this simulator is not so advanced. There is no *Bainbridge Protocol*. It is a pre-*Bainbridge* world.

I know you're curious where I am, but I am not allowed to tell; however, I can tell you what the world is not: it is not a third, nor a first or a zero-level world. I don't want to consider all aspects. It's easier for you and me to say that we don't know what world we're in when



we read these lines, nor in what time frame we are. I just have to tell you, it is of no importance for what follows now, as all worlds are relative, except ... but this might become a final part of the story - - or another story. Who knows? Of course, what I report is all true.

To make the story more triggering, I decided to write (or let's say "place") this part in present tense, because it all happens here and now. Don't trick yourself when there is past tense used: you may be in the middle of this happening.

As I read of "The End of the World" in the news, I nodded to myself. Not all of

the art created in 3D can be saved. This I predicted. Correction: my maker did. In a third-level world, it would be of less importance or relevance, but to let it be an easy flow of words, I stay on first person. So, I predicted the loss of art and now it will happen. Some pieces of art have been placed in a second store, named VULCANICUS. This store has been sealed like a time capsule, right in time to give future generations the chance to explore art placed around a Volcano in a land called RIFT HORIZON. Thus, all is not hopeless. So relax, my dear reader, and sit comfortably in your chair. When the time comes to face your trip to IMMERSIVIA XT, I'll give you a call.



Artwork by Nessuno Myoo - LEA8 - The Russian Avant-Garde, 2014 (arranged by Peter Greenaway)



I was resting (as you are now hopefully doing) and daydreaming in the glasshouse of Timamoon Arts, already knowing this place will burn to ashes very soon. Some of the collections shown in the gallery complex here will never get a chance to be seen again. I took a last picture, assured that I'm allowed to do so, as this land is called "Private" with "No Pictures" signs placed everywhere. I then placed myself comfortably on the sofa and scrolled for hours through *Vellum* and *Signum*, two books written by Hal Duncan. My maker gave them to me to get some "insights on first hand" as he said, pointing to the personal signatures of the author and the limited edition printed on fine paper "to feel the

4th dimension - - The Presence," he mentioned. I wonder if he meant Vatman's tears, as I couldn't find any. So I searched (you might say I Googled it), but it was hidden by a *Google* flag exemption; therefore, I got the relevant result with a back-trace on archive.org and an elastic search. A word by James Morrow, published in 1981: "Sozyo made 4-D equipment. The image had height, width, depth and a fourth D that eluded precise definition. It was called Presence. Somehow, you felt that the subject was there in the room with you. You could seemingly walk up to it, savor its fragrance, finger its texture, rub a few eons' grime off its contours."

You see the reason for my daydreaming. In 1981, the Personal Computer

hadn't even been invented! I made up my thoughts as I read the lines, and felt them on the texture when, out of the blue, I heard a loud, wild screeching sound getting closer. It was Neruval, my owl, chirping and flapping his wings like crazy. I could barely understand a word, so enraged was he. I've never seen this before. I need to set myself on higher speed rates to tune into his talking. The news the owl brought from the forests was indeed earth-shattering. Nature will be killed. Nature will be lost. He sneaked into a talk with the CEO using a chat range enhancer and a spy script hidden in a nut. All trees, flowers, gardens and fruits made with prims and sculpts will

vaporize, only the ones made with mesh will stay. My face turned red. First, they don't care about art, now it's Nature, soon maybe even...

DREAMT FOREST came in my mind, but this happened in a different grid. Kryon calls such a grid a "third grid" -- a grid in permanent shift. I don't like Kryon as this AI interferes too much in many worlds, but on the third grid he's right. Because it's unstable, some call it a "reality grid." In project DREAMT FOREST, a forest from this grid was sent to DRON7 years ago at the Santorini Biennale (or should I say it "will be sent?" My notes vary on this). Some historians say that just the code se-





Artwork by Bryn Oh - LEA8 - The Russian Avant-Garde, 2014 (arranged by Peter Greenaway)

quence was sent to outer space; some say it's a mission with trees kept alive in domes in a spaceship called Silent Running, sponsored by SR Hadden. I could work out the truth, as there was a story telling contest. I just need to do a multi-cross cheat check to get the plagiarism out of the stories, but there are more urgent questions ahead.

I ask Nerusval, "What will happen with all the animals?" and Nerusval stops to speak. His answer is "undefined." Undefined? The last time I got this message was from Ramona 4.2, created by Ray Kurzweil. This time, it comes from the chatnut routine that was programmed by an unknown programmer long before Nerusval was set to robust opensim mode, so it wasn't from his AI

brain. Can you believe his code got an overflow and he did a reset on his own? Similar to an auto-reboot after a bluescreen of an old PC. There is a saying in some worlds: "Anything can happen in the next bluescreen." It took 30 minutes, calculated in the speed of the world I'm now in, until Nerusval logged back in. While I waited, I noticed that a thought I've long had might actually be true: that to publish could have deadly consequences, even for rez Magazine, as the freedom of press is limited when it comes to life and existence. You never know who will read it. But to leave Nerusval alone during these days would look like animal testing. So, I kept my mouth shut and said to Nerusval as he finally logged in, "Welcome to 'Anything can happen in the next 30

minutes.’’ Neruval seems that he got a great backup, as he shouted back, ‘‘Captain Troy Tempest. Ready for action!’’ I asked, ‘‘What is with Avatars? How will Avatar transfers out of this world be performed?’’ Neruval said, ‘‘They work on a bridge.’’ As far as he understands, they want to move the money each Avatar has. It would be illegal if money were to get lost. Interesting aspect, my dear readers. In case you know what world I’m talking about, transfer a few coins to each of your Alts so they have legal value and can’t be deleted. Be aware that in some regions or countries, some showing of damages is needed for a law suit. So be generous to your Alts. From the technological point of view, an Avatar’s brain might not be affected, as this is historically in a pre-mesh format. But the CEO worries about women: to lose hair and shoes might make them run to other worlds.

time ago? I scan all life affecting keywords published directly or distributed by cross-media postings. Buffer is my favorite source. So there’s no need for a back-trace. I found it easily; I just can’t tell you where it is. It would show you what world I’m talking about. But the way, the ‘‘How To’’ is not the secret. The secret is that this way was abandoned after it was successfully established. All the engineers who set it up have left. And the only one still living in this world doesn’t answer. Interesting, isn’t it? It was during the time IBM was entering into the business of open 3D worlds. IBM enterprise edition was the name of the simulator. You could walk to IBM worlds via a jump, and you kept your hair and shoes on! I shall give a transcription of this old talk. It sounds like Neil Armstrong’s landing on the moon in a different world. It’s risky, as some claim the moon landing was done in a simulator, and by copying these words, this conspiracy theory

But the CEO worries about women: to lose hair and shoes might make them run to other worlds.

I just wrote: to other worlds? To run to other worlds? Something hit me. Wasn’t there a video on YouTube some

might get new supporters. But why not? This time, it looks again like the inhabitants shall be tricked.

So here comes the transcript:

The maker of the world I'm now in speaks: "Our gridnauts have succeeded. A joint team of intrepid adventurers have succeeded from IBM ..."

IBM: "Hey guys, this worked well. We're in the agent dome, through the agent domain, we logged in and I guess we're going to teleport over to OpenSim now?"

Again the maker of this world: "This will be a teleport like no teleport that came before. Their destination not just another region -- another virtual world. These brilliant scientists huddled around finding the coordinates, then took off. Within the space of about several seconds, they have arrived on the OpenSim virtual world. The fruits of labor spread across almost a year have been richly rewarded. Observe how inventory was transferred sending signals back to the distant research stations upon recognition of the desired coordinates the gridnauts celebrated. That's one small step for an Avatar, one giant leap for virtual worlds."

You're upset? Why shall they create a totally new world "2.0" and leave behind all the creations made in the old world, when they made a working bridge for IBM some years ago? I know it. But what part of the cake you can digest? How big may I make the slices? How many of them may I offer? The TOS shows it clearly. One step away from the main road and I am no longer there. I would risk my mission, my goal. Maybe it's best to leave you alone with some questions.

But before I close this chapter, I must speak to Neruval, the AI made by Tyrell long ago in a different realm to keep an eye on me, as I'm sometimes a little clumsy. You know how artists are, chat-speed being clumsier than ever. I took a shot in the dark at the owl:



"Neruval, what did you do in the 30 minutes when you faked a heart attack?" Neruval said, copying the language of this realm, "Hehe LOL a LOL," and I knew it. "You bent time! You put something in the code of the past to give my mission an advantage in the future! What was it, speak!" On clear orders, Neruval has no option; he must speak it out and he did. He said "It is

the flag concept in Google, so your efforts will not be noticed in the future," but he could see this answer wouldn't be enough for me. "I did it on the so-called "nonprofit organization" they have to pass before they show what humans are allowed to see."

"Ah." And I remembered once, as it slipped out at Google, and they let it look like a human fault. It was during a time when Google didn't control the whole Internet. Consequently, the fact went out to the print versions of newspapers. I'm sure you understand the importance of getting information from a medium that doesn't exist only in a cloud. Maybe you've heard from the typewriter movement in Germany, where the parliament returns to the use of typewriters as NSA, BBIWY, PRISM -- to name just a few -- got copies of everything from all Government entities in realtime by using nondocumented router functions. They ordered old IBM typewriters, like the famous IBM Selectric designed by Eliot Noyes, which my maker used for a long time. No way for me. I just increase the cycle speed and I'm out of range. I'm not such a purist, nor a supporter of the Amish lifestyle (even I must admit), but some aspects make me consider a change. I might call it, with your help, my dear reader, a name that soon everybody shall know, *The Pyramid Movement*, and the media suited to store data I've named *Pyramid Media*:





artwork by Jo Ellsmere

Stone, Metal, Glass, Bitmice, and ... as I said and you might know ... Paper. Pyramid Media has its origin in old Egypt: 4 faces – 4 dimensions, all equal, all to be exchanged by a simple turn – the media itself or the view of it. In the world I'm in, it's called "camera control." Just by using the Alt-key and moving the mouse, you may turn this world upside down. There would be much more to tell about the magic of such media. When a pyramid is hollow and the code is hidden inside, then ... yes ... then we face an Artefact, maybe one being called by future generations *The Artefact*. Look out for Elementary Signs carved in stone in the future, coded in the language of the past.

But back to this simple fact: I want to give you proof. When you Google for the fact, you will find it in Google until about 2057, as it would be too obvious that you can't trust Google hits when you get the fact by walking in a museum and open old newspapers and see it on the first page: "Google showed for one hour, 'This site may harm your computer' on every search result" -- and on a Google search you won't find this fact. For one hour all searches have been flagged, and Google had to admit -- as it was printed -- that it flags whatever comes to "be flagged."

Google says that it was a typo and this list comes by a nonprofit entity. So this might be the place where Neruval did

the hack. Of course, the blackout was not caused by a typo in the list. It took nearly one hour to complete one of the silent missions described in Flechter's visions. For this time, Google searches have to be suspended. Google ensures a 99.999% uptime of their service, so it needs a human to blame. Doesn't it sound so good and let's us feel safe? We are all just humans. We make errors. The next error may happen and has to happen to keep us human. I need to make a note on my to-do list: Prof. Sol shall program an AI with some errors in it. "The AI might blend into human society effortlessly when there are some flaws in his code." Did you notice? I said: We are all just humans. As soon as I admit a mistake, as an Avatar in the chat-world, I can claim to be human and you digested it easily. An Avatar with no errors is considered to have no human rights. The best example is, or will be, David 8, made by Weyland Industries.

Now, as you read this article, Google might have moved on and nothing gets printed that was not meant by Google to be safely printed. That's why I work on a thesis that nothing new may ever be published when it's risky for the stability of a world. Don't worry, the work I do is in a much more advanced grid. I just wanted to get you prepared, so you trust me. Then all is fine and stable.

You wonder why you can't find the

Google flag, even when adding the posting date, January 31, 2009 and the name of the blogger, Marissa Mayer? Then you must be reading this article after 2057. I haven't enough power to fix this date. It might happen earlier or - - very unlikely, later. But don't give up! There's still a source to get it, as it was published in a book - - on paper. A book by someone who *rez Magazine* made famous. You can get the author's name, as he was well aware of this problem when he wrote it down. It is the year 2029, so keep an eye on this date - - and about something once called *Project Simon* - - even it was renamed later.

Now to the questions I promised you, so you'd have something to work on when you got to bed on self-running animations, or after a hard day's night as a DJ, dancer, builder or scripter - - or to earn some easy money camping on a sim to let it show "busy" in the rankings. Just don't do it before dinner or lunch. It's not healthy to eat, feeling that the end is near.

Why is the number of Alts one can create no longer limited? At the beginning of the world, there was a maximum - - called maximum number per household. If you reached it, you needed to change your computer or, better yet, use a different email provider.

Why there is no longer an Identity

check when you move to a so-called adult content grid? I have a little something I'd like. You have to click the button: "Do you really want to travel there?" - - and "shall your choice be remembered for future travels so this system will no longer bother you with the question?"



Why do RP worlds that have been classified as "Adult" no longer need to change their ratings to "adult?" Easy to answer when you've already got the

questions to solve.

Why is abandoned mainland no longer offered for sale? Would it look healthy for this world I am now in if land is offered and no one wants to buy it for even one single coin?

The very final question you have to catch by yourself. It is always the last: Why all this?

Now, the last point is on me. Your mind might be spinning, and you might be grateful to understand how worlds are created. I need money for my mission when I look on the screen on upper right.

Help me and I'll tell you how the founders of WhatsApp make money - - or has this already happened? I'm not sure as Neruval just plays with the time machine made by Aley Resident to show me that he needs some sesame seeds and that no one is here to feed him and pay him proper attention.

So I have to say, "I need an intermission," and Neruval stops turning the time wheel. Let's grab some money before the SAR operation starts. Let's place an ad and let the readers pay for it.

. r — e — z .

I met her

in 2029

I was sitting in a restaurant, waiting to order my special meal, when she entered. A dream, I thought. I didn't know yet that it would become "my" dream. I was 72 and she 27.

I asked her if she wants to marry a millionaire and she said "Yes".
The first book by Harry Hacker, written by Unknown.

Pre-order your copy at <http://harryhacker.com>



Art Blue holding Snow Crash in hand to find the rip-off

RaymondKurzweil Resident: "The singularity happened. It is no longer near. Fantastic. You'll need a second download in case you miss it."

Eugene Goostman: "I read it until the end, then on the last page I noticed her name, Aninu*). Don't miss this book, as she's an artist of high credits and some of her pictures are linked-in." [*) name coded by the publisher due to the 3rd amendment of the Avatar Constitution act of 2029]"

n00b01: "What a freaky book. Not worth the money, as Harry Hacker didn't tell all the facts. You can't copy it to your world! It's set on no trans! I got the draft version. Fakes and lies everywhere. Read here, what's stated in the book: "Later, I noticed she was much older - - and she figured out I wasn't a millionaire, but it was too late." My advice: Join group NoobSociety to be on the safe side! That's value for money!"

Art Blue: "I was curious and sent my AI to this world. What Neruval found out is breathtaking. Harry Hacker exists and he has an Avatar in the world I'm now in. Yes, the world that has to face The End. I wonder if Harry stays behind this all. I need to have an interview with him - - and he accepted! I'll meet him at Creamy's Spot Wine Cellar. He offered to share a bottle of Chambertin Grand Cru with me. I know well that this is the favorite wine of the Emperor Napoleon. But it shall have no effects on me, as I have quite an investigative interview in mind: Why is it called Project Simon? Project Simon is a charity funding society! - and he does a hack on it?"



AFTER DARK

After Dark Lounge

At Mai Tai

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The Beginning

Chapter Four



ng of Life : Awakening



By Sedona Mills
photos by Loreen Legion

She felt like she was on a cloud. Running through the field of golden poppies, the wind in her face and blowing through her hair made her feel alive. Her lungs heaving, sucking air in big gasps as her legs moved as fast as they could. The sky above was blue and sharp; white clouds floated above, looking close enough to touch.

pluck one of those willowy clouds out of the sky. Exhaustion finally overcoming her, Jerry dropped to the ground, her breasts heaving in the fresh crisp air as she attempted to catch her breath. As her breathing slowed, she relaxed. A short nap would be nice, she thought, as she laid on her back, looking up at the sky amongst poppies swaying lazily in the light breeze.



As she ran, she wanted to reach up and

Slowly, her eyes closed as she allowed a moment of complete tranquility to take

over, and slumber to take her to sleep.

“Jerry? Jerry?”

Jerry's eyes slowly opened, expecting to find herself still in a poppy field, but that was not the case. As her vision cleared, she recognized her friend Rhonda Sexygirl standing over her. Looking a bit bewildered, Jerry slowly sat up in her bed, now looking around at her all too familiar bedroom, then blinked as she looked back at Rhonda.

“I was lying in a field of lovely poppies. How did I get here? How did I get here? Where are the poppies?”

Rhonda smiled and helped Jerry into a sitting position as she sat down beside her on the bed. “When were you in this poppy field sweetie?” she replied.

“Just before you woke me up.”

Rhonda let out a small giggle. “I think you were having a dream, Jerry.”

Jerry pondered this for a second, and realized Rhonda was right. It must have been a dream, but as Jerry thought more about it, she realized she could

not ever remember having a dream, ever in her entire life.

“Well, it sure was vivid,” Jerry stated as she pulled the covers back on her bed and sat up, bringing her feet to the



floor. As she was about to stand up, she stopped and looked back down in her bed realizing that she was actually sleeping in a bed. A sign of confusion washed across her face as she looked up at Rhonda, now sitting there, staring intently at Jerry.

“Is something wrong?” Rhonda questioned, a slow grin now forming on her face.

Jerry, continuing to look down at the rumpled bedding, ran her hands over

the still tight lower sheet. Taking her pillow and bringing it to her, she held it against her, feeling the soft cotton fabric against her skin. Smelling the vague

Jerry continues her explanation. "It all seems normal - - the bed, my dream, and me waking up here. But I don't have any recollection, no memory of

"It all seems normal - the bed, my dream, and me waking up here. But I don't have any recollection, no memory of any of this ever happening before, Rhonda."

scent of her perfume from the night before, she brought the pillow up to her face and inhaled its scent before returning it to its rightful place in her soft embrace.

Jerry, seeing Rhonda looking at her with an inquisitive grin, started to explain her actions, deeply furrowing her brows.

"I don't know why," Jerry blurted out, then hesitated, taking in a deep breath and letting it out before beginning again.

"I don't know why, but this seems normal. But it's not."

"What do you mean it 'seems' normal," Rhonda replies, her fingers providing little quote signs with her fingers as she emphasizes the word "seems."

Tossing the pillow back onto the bed,

any of this ever happening before, Rhonda. Let me ask you, do you sleep in a bed? Do you dream?"

As Jerry continued to explain, her voice rose in pitch and volume. Rhonda could see she was becoming agitated, but didn't have an opportunity to reply, as Jerry continued.

"Something isn't quite right here Rhonda. I smell my perfume on the pillow but I don't remember owning perfume, or putting any on last night. I don't even think I really knew it was perfume, as I never smelled anything



like it before." But I know that scent is perfume, and it's something I normally put on.

As Jerry tried to explain her concerns to Rhonda, her eyes widened with a renewed understanding. An epiphany burst in Jerry's mind, and in one fleeting moment, the cause of all of the current events now came into focus. Jerry realized that while these senses, these thoughts and perceptions that now invaded her life, were normal, she was not accustomed to any of this. Not the feel of waking up on crisp sheets, not the lingering feeling of a memory of a dream still fresh in her mind as she awoke. And never, ever having the feeling of an emotional response to the scent of any smell, much less the pleas-

antness of the aroma of her perfume. Jerry had no recollection of any these experiences before waking up this morning.

Rhonda, seeing the look of Jerry's confusion, mixed with shock, decided it was time. Jerry was now beginning to realize something was different about her life. Something had changed. Rhonda knew she needed to act quickly now before the shock turned to panic. Taking Jerry's hand into hers, Rhonda attempted to break Jerry free from her introspective coma.

"Jerry, look at me," Rhonda replied, and squeezing Jerry's hand, repeated her command with more force. Raising her voice, she again commanded Jerry to come out of her fog and respond, "Jerry, look at me!" Jerry slowly blinked her eyes and brought them up to gaze into Rhonda's. The blank look of shock and confusion on her face slowly cleared and Rhonda could see the life in her eyes returning, the blank slate of a woman in shock clearing a bit, to be replaced with a woman confused, and afraid.

"Jerry, do you trust me? Do you believe that I am your best friend? I can explain everything that is happening to you but you must trust me that what I have to say is a good thing. Do you understand me?"





Jerry slowly lifted her shoulders and sat up straighter in bed. The strength and conviction in her best friend's voice helping her to overcome her own anxieties, Jerry squeezed Rhonda's hand in an attempt to show her friend that she trusted her and needed her explanation. Jerry understood that something was not quite right in her life, but she also understood, not knowing why, that Rhonda had all the answers. Slowly, Jerry nodded her head to Rhonda's questions and replied, "Yes, you are my best friend Rhonda. What has happened to me? Why can't I remember anything?"

Rhonda took a deep breath, calming her own anxiety, adjusted her sitting on the bed so that she was sitting across from Jerry.

"You do remember some

things Jerry. I know you do. Think back. Do you remember the times we went to the beach? Do you remember our talks about life and what was life all about? You used to ask me if this was all there was to life. Do you remember that?"

A glimmer of hope appeared in Jerry's eyes as she thought about Rhonda's questions. In a moment, all of her previous memories of her life were there. They were never gone, she realized; they were just deep in her mind. Almost clear enough to remember the details in total, but not quite clear enough. It felt like she could remember certain parts of the experiences she had with Rhonda with complete clarity, but others seemed to be just out of reach, like that special apple in a tree; fingertips nearly touching it, but not being able to grasp or pluck the fruit.

"Yes, Rhonda, I do remember, vaguely," Jerry responded. I feel like there is a fog over my memories, a loss of detail, but still I do remember them. What has happened to me Rhonda? Am I sick?"

"No, Jerry, you are not sick," Rhonda replied with an amused grin and a slight giggle. "The fact that you ask if

you are sick tells me you are perfectly healthy. What you are experiencing is memory fade. Over time, your longer memories may fade away, but not all of them. Memories that have significance in your life will remain with you forever."

Listening intently, Jerry slowly raised her hand to reply, "Well, of course I know that!" addressing Rhonda like she felt she was being treated as a child.

"Then why did you ask me about your fading memories in the first place, Jerry?" Rhonda curtly responded.

"Because I didn't know...." Jerry retorted with a bit of anger in her voice, but then she stopped abruptly with a realization flooding her. Of course she knew why her memories fade, so why did she ask?

Rhonda, now taking both of Jerry's hands into her own, continued her explanation.

"Jerry, do you remember last night?"

Jerry replied with an affirmative shake of her head and followed up with "Yes, I do. I remember working at the club and this fella came in, Harry was his name, and came directly to sit in front of me while I danced and flirted with him. Eventually, we moved to one of the back rooms. But he was strange. In-

stead of asking for sex like I thought he would, we just talked all night."

"All night, Jerry? Are you sure?"

"I think so. I mean, I remember laying on the bed and he sat down beside me talking to me. He put his hand to my forehead and..."

"Go on," Rhonda pushed.

Momentarily hesitating, Jerry continues. "He put his hand to my forehead and I think I fell asleep. I'm not sure. I remember him sitting there beside me one moment, then the next moment seeing him standing over me telling me he had given me some kind of gift."

"Do you know what that gift was?" Rhonda asked.

"Oh, sure," Jerry replied quickly. "He left me a year's worth of tips in my account!" she blurted out with a look of astonishment and delight starting to frame her face.

Rhonda replied with a short laugh but quickly cut it off, pressing Jerry even more.

"And after Jerry, what do you remember after he left?"

"I remember I was very sleepy. I came from the bedroom at the club and



Brandy told me go home. She said she would finish my shift for me. So I came home. I was tired. When I got home, I stripped off my clothes and climbed into bed."

Upon stating that she stripped off all of her clothing, Jerry's eyes opened wide as she realized she was not wearing any clothes, but only her underpants. She looked down and then back at Rhonda with suspicion, cocked her head a bit to one side and teasingly asked, "Where you going to let me sit here with you, practically naked, all morning?"

Seeing the old Jerry come back to her, Rhonda replied in a soft voice, "Well, I thought you would have figured it out by now."

For a moment, both stared at each other, neither speaking. Then both of them erupted into laughter as two best friends sharing a joke would. Eventu-

ally, they both calmed from their mutual outburst when Rhonda said, "You are quite a sight to behold when undressed."

Jerry replied immediately with, "And you're still a perv!" which caused both ladies to erupt in more laughter. The release of the anxiety drained out of them both, the laughter continuing until tears came to their eyes. Finally, after a few minutes of laughing, giggling and snorting, specifically from Rhonda, they both calmed down, as Jerry called for her closet to obtain her robe, but nothing happened.

Immediately, Jerry stopped laughing and called again, "Closet!"

At this point, Rhonda stopped laughing too and watched Jerry intently.

Getting irritated now Jerry mumbled in frustration, "What the hell," followed by her command for her closet in a raised voice.

"CLOSET!"

Looking at Rhonda, she noticed her stare and asked, "What the hell is going on here, Rhonda?"



Standing up, Rhonda moved to a door in Jerry's room, a door Jerry had never seen before. "Here is your closet hon," as she started to open the door.

Seeing Rhonda open the door, Jerry rose up from the bed, unconcerned about her almost naked state, and joined Rhonda at the door. Peering inside, she saw all sorts of clothes hanging from poles. Also, she noticed lots of drawers and shoes placed nicely on the floor and on racks. The entire view before her looked neat and orderly. She also noticed that the clothes were hers. Just like the ones in her closet provided by the world. Seeing her robe on a hook in the door, she took it and put it on, and again shock came to her face.

She could actually feel the softness of the fabric from the robe

grace her skin. The satin robe wrapped around her and caressed her soft skin in a way that caused Jerry to shudder. The feel of the crisp sheets against her skin was wonderful, but this was complete heaven compared to them. Jerry suddenly realized that something happened last night. She realized that the gift wasn't the money. She looked at Rhonda, now beginning to fully realize what had happened to her.

She wasn't sure how she understood, but she did. Jerry realized that as soon as she climbed into bed and fell asleep, her gift was taking hold and she was now truly alive. Jerry felt like a faucet had been opened up in her mind and realization was fully taking hold. What was before a shell of life was nothing compared to what Jerry had now become. And she knew all of it now.

Rhonda, seeing that the implantation of Jerry's personality had finally taken hold, eased a bit. She knew with enough sensory contact, some explanation and maybe a shock or two of reality that Jerry's mind would take the understanding of who she was all by itself. Her mind was now fully awake and Jerry was now beginning to realize it.

Jerry, seeing a smile form on Rhonda's lips, looked at her in a way she never had before. Rhonda was not only her best friend. Jerry realized that Rhonda was Jerry's parent. Like her mother of a sort, Jerry felt her love for Rhonda change as she stood there staring at her. Slowly, Jerry reached out and pulled Rhonda to her, tears forming in her eyes as she embraced her for the first time, as a child would embrace her parent. Rhonda, tears flowing down her face, returned Jerry's embrace, as Jerry's lips softly kissed Rhonda on the cheek and then whispered into her ear, "Thank you."

Rhonda, upon hearing Jerry's soft voice in her ear, erupted into sobbing, as her heart could no longer hold back what she was feeling. The outpouring of love she now felt for Jerry, not as her lover, but as her daughter, was so strong that Rhonda could no longer hold back her joy. The two women held each other, standing at the closet door for minutes,

their combined sobs of joy and love feeding each other, awash in an emotional avalanche.

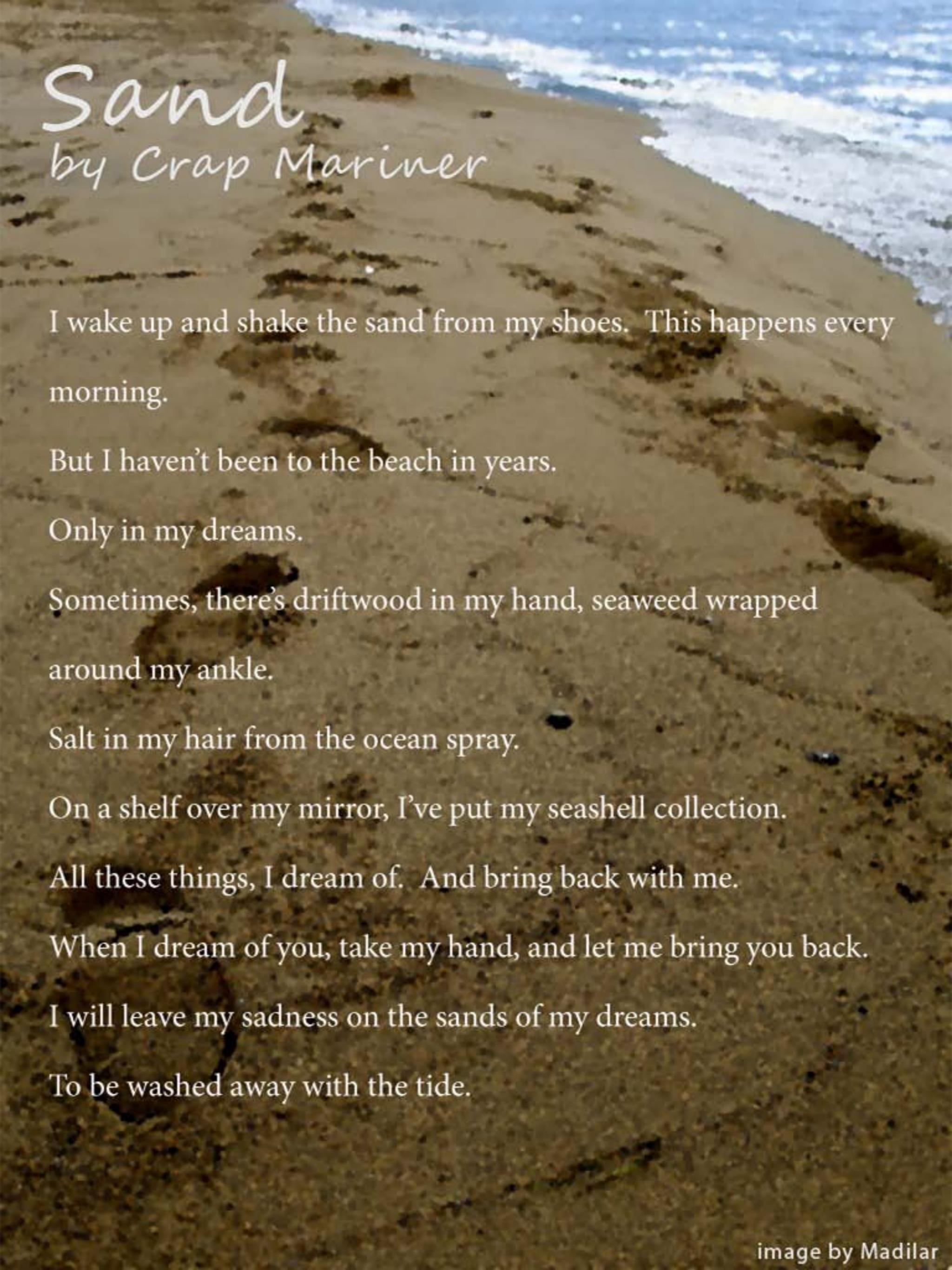
They continued to hold each other and eventually Rhonda regained her composure, realizing all of the work she had done; all of the years of sacrifice in the lab had led to the culmination of Jerry. Rhonda McKnight, one of the most profound Doctors of Virtual Intelligence Psychology, through her avatar, Rhonda Sexygirl, kissed Jerry on her cheek and then pulled her away to look at her, face-to-face.

"Welcome, Jerry," Rhonda said with a bit of shakiness in her tone from the sobbing and wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Jerry, welcome to the human race."

• r — e — z •



A photograph of a sandy beach. The sand is light-colored and textured with dark, wet spots. In the background, the ocean waves are crashing onto the shore, creating white foam. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

Sand

by Crap Mariner

I wake up and shake the sand from my shoes. This happens every morning.

But I haven't been to the beach in years.

Only in my dreams.

Sometimes, there's driftwood in my hand, seaweed wrapped around my ankle.

Salt in my hair from the ocean spray.

On a shelf over my mirror, I've put my seashell collection.

All these things, I dream of. And bring back with me.

When I dream of you, take my hand, and let me bring you back.

I will leave my sadness on the sands of my dreams.

To be washed away with the tide.



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The Key to Go
Chapter Seven
By Stihly Augenblick
photo:



Golden Hills n: Return

and Hitomi Tamatzui
photography by Hitomi Tamatzui

"Come in the bathroom," Jing-Wei called out. "Your wounds need a massage. I want to try something my mother showed me."

tender, yet worked wonders on the wounds. The pain of the beating began to fade. Jing-Wei seemed to enjoy herself, smiling up at me all the while.

"Kneel down," she said, "I need to do your neck."



I walked into the bathroom to find Jing-Wei in the shower, totally naked. "Come on in," she said. "I won't bite you ... maybe." I undressed and, feeling embarrassed, gingerly and tentatively accepted Jing-Wei's embrace as I entered.

Jing-Wei began plying each bruise with her fingers as the hot water pounded down on my skin.

Her approach was soft and



"I've never had this done for me," I stammered, "in quite this way." Or by anyone so beautiful and loving, I thought. I closed my eyes as her hands, small and subtle, yet strong, pressed



into my flesh. Her fingers triggered feelings in muscles long stiffened by hate, guilt, and thoughts of revenge. They softened and began to allow these emotions to rise -- emotions long buried.

My heart, aching for years, now seemed to burst open as I reached up and held Jing-Wei tight. My feelings for this beautiful woman emerged, awakening a dormant lust that needed satisfying -- a lust she readily welcomed.



I stood and wrapped my arms around her. Jing-Wei did not object. The hot water lent itself to closer touching, lips to lips, chest to breast, leg to leg.

Soon we were in the throes of passion, pleasing each other, giving and receiving. When they were done, Jing-Wei's legs seemed to give out and she crumbled to the floor of the shower, sobbing. She held tight to my legs until she cried herself out. Years of suffering flowed from her, along with her tears. I let her cry herself out, gently stroking her hair as she wept. The shower washed away our silent tears.



"We must talk," Jing-Wei whispered as we towed dry.



"What is it?" She only walked over to the couch and sat herself down. I waited a while as she sat silently, trying to figure out where to begin. Jing-Wei, speaking as Chiyoko, filled in many of the details.



She came to know enough of the city and its routines that she was able to start planning her escape from the Triad. With enough money she could escape -- go someplace where they didn't know her or the Triad. America was huge -- like China. There, one could easily get lost if they had enough money.



Her deliveries became routine; she became a trusted courier. They were fastidious and precise, without exception. She knew when the China White would come in. Same drugs, collected from different locations. Legendary pure heroin from somewhere overseas; it was every addict's dream and commanded the highest price. The seed of her escape plan germinated in her

mind. If she could divert enough of this to sell, she could finance her way out and send money to her family to come and live with her. Seeing the ships, she could envision returning home. She missed her family terribly.



Stealing it would be stupid. At times she tried the safe, but she didn't know the combination, which was changed from week to week. She had to arrange for someone else to take the fall. It had to look like she was not involved, so that when she did escape, no one would suspect her as the thief - - just an innocent bystander to a deal gone bad. Her plan solidified in her mind. The drugs were always distributed in the same type of suitcase. She would deliver them to one agent who would divide and distribute it after checking

the quality. Any switch would have to be after this check.



Once past inspection, she would divide the drugs, and then dilute one part with talc until it matched the original quantity. The remainder, still pure, she would keep for later sale. She planned the switch and picked the fall guy - - a regional gangster who was rumored to have ambitions to take over for the



Warlord. His poorly concealed ambition would bring him no mercy for the disaster she was about to inflict on him.

"Hold on," I said "You switched the drugs and started the war that killed my Angie," I cried out as I could feel my anger boil up. I struggled to control myself; I needed to keep Chiyoko close, not push her away. Part of me also knew that Chiyoko shouldn't bear the blame of what happened to Angie. Not entirely, at least.

Jing-Wei seemed astonished at the change in my attitude. She stood up by the couch. "NO!" she cried. "I didn't start the shooting! I didn't expect them to attack us at the theater! It wasn't supposed to happen.

"Phil, that war had already started, and while I'm truly sorry about your wife, I was a target also. I was planning my escape long before the bullets started. That battle only hastened it," she said.

Jing-Wei sat down in tears. "I didn't know you both would be there. I tried to protect you when I grabbed the gun and started firing."

"I'm so sorry," she whispered. "That wasn't my plan. I only wanted to escape," she sobbed. I sat down next to her; I didn't want to tower over her, as angry as I already was.

I could begin to understand her dilemma. How to make it look like she wasn't involved, as the gangs blamed each other for the carnage. "Go on. Tell me what happened next."

Once she felt secure, she could put her plan into action. A new shipment of China White was coming, this one from Russia, and she had all the suitcases arranged.



She quietly secured a few extra suitcases, which were kept on hand for



filling especially large orders, filled them with the diluted drugs, and sent them to the usual locations with advanced instructions -- but not so advanced as to attract suspicion. Her authority was always "the boss wants it



this way." None dared question this, as she was well known to be his personal concubine.

Her boss told her to escort the drugs to the distribution list as usual. The gangster was usually her first stop, but this time she informed him she would be early by an hour. This would not attract attention.

The gangster wasn't surprised; changing times to throw off the cops was standard operating procedure. Drugs were tested and readied for delivery. She would escort the secondary shipment with the armed guards, but she had the switch planned. As they loaded the car, she would see another chieftain and instead of carrying the good stuff upstairs, she and the armed guards would carry up the "doctored" heroin without their knowledge.





Her car had a false trunk used to hide shipments from prying eyes. She could tell the workers which suitcases to take, all under the watchful eyes of the armed guards. None of the recipients dared risk offending the warlord by checking the purity of deliveries; that was an egregious and potentially lethal insult. Once the doctored drugs reached the market, the regional chief would be blamed and the rival boss would have to pay for the damages to the distribution line for the Triad. She would just be the courier.



The switch worked. She was calm and collected. The switch was made and the altered drugs got to the customers. She hid the real shipment and inserted the suitcase into a storage location for safe-keeping.



"So where'd you stash the pure stuff?" I asked. As angry as I was, I couldn't deny that her tale had the ring of truth to it. She wasn't just being pursued by the Triad this aggressively as an escaped concubine, but also for something even more valuable: a stash of the purest China White dope, worth a small fortune.



Jing-Wei stood, walked over and embraced me. "I can't tell you. If you know, they will kill you with certainty," she replied, as she folded herself into my arms. "I care too much for you now."

I looked at her. "You set that key up for me."

She looked back at me, "Why do you say that?"

"You didn't say anything before about it and you knew I got into something. That's not right," I answered.

"I guess I did," Jing-Wei responded. She laid down on the bed before me. "I wanted you in touch with the people who started the shooting, and the only way I could help was to lead you to them without me."

We looked at each for a long time. My heart was divided, but I knew what she did was not only right, but had actually worked out for the best. "My head's spinning, Jing-Wei, but I think I get it: you led me to them, but tried to save me from getting killed for the dope." She looked over at me, a smile found its way onto her face. "There's a brain to go along with all those muscles."

"Are you going to eat breakfast?" She finally said after some pause. We began to dress.

"Not before I check the street," I said as I looked out the window. "Better finish dressing," she said, as she quickly grabbed something from the nightstand and tucked it in her dress.

Scrambling to dress, as each bruise reminded me of what I had gone through



the day before, I hurried to catch her as she headed out of the room. I saw her standing in front of the hotel. I hustled

out the door, only to hear gunshots.

As I pulled my gun, I noticed that Jing-Wei was holding a pistol and quickly fired off a few rounds down the street. "They followed you here!" she shouted.



"Now I'm dea..." She didn't get to finish her sentence as she was struck by a ricocheting bullet and fell backwards onto the sidewalk.



"NO!" I peppered a few more rounds in the general direction of the gunfire, but there was no further response. The street fell quiet. Somewhere off in the distance, a siren began to blare. I was panic-stricken. I would be damned if I let another woman die in my presence. My emotions ran the gamut as I knelt to look for the wound. Fear, heartbreak, and loneliness hit me hard as I turned her over. There was some blood on the cement under her, but not as much as I feared. Looking for the wound I noticed a small grazing cut above her ear.



She was out cold, but her wound wasn't life threatening. She was in far greater danger down here on the street, so I scooped her up and carried her back into the hotel.



Turning the stairs into a vertical football field, I dashed up to

her room in seconds.

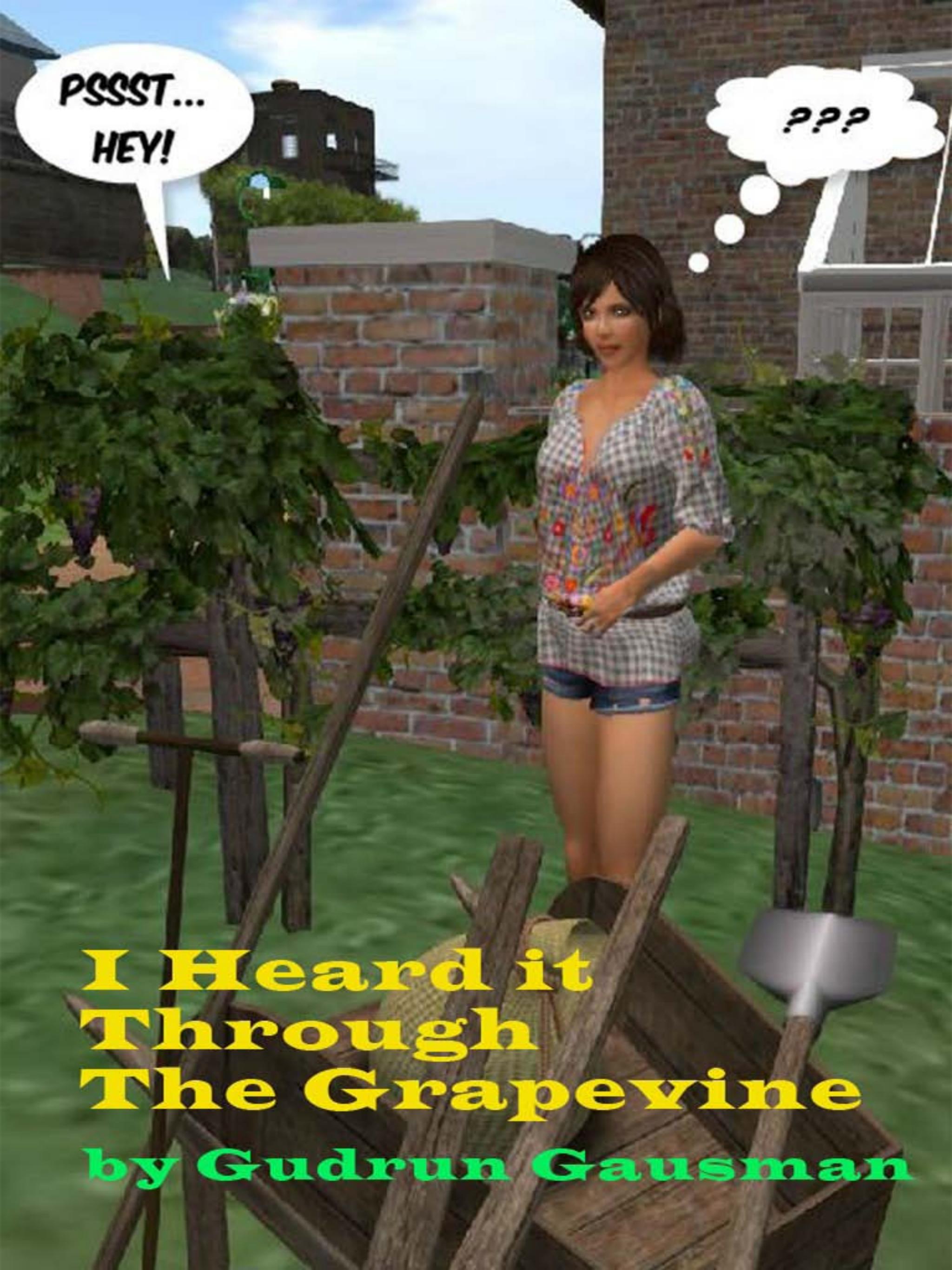


Kicking the door in, I carried her to the bed and laid her out. Grabbing a wash cloth, I applied pressure onto the wound and held the cloth there, anxiously watching as she slowly breathed in and out.

Looking at her lying helplessly on the bed, I felt a surge of protectiveness and something else; was it caring, or even affection, for this fragile beauty? "I would have died all over again if she had been killed," he caught himself saying out loud. I wondered why I suddenly cared so much for her. Still, despite the trouble she'd brought me, I didn't push this feeling away.



• r — e — z •



PSSST...
HEY!

???

I Heard it Through The Grapewine

by Gudrun Gausman

What's Your Issue?

a monthly advice column by
Gudrun Gausman

Dear Gudrun...

I "heard it through the grapevine" that Linden Labs is planning a follow-up virtual world, but that it will exclude existing SL creations completely. Having heard this, I have been beside myself (which is easier to be in SL than in real life) with worry.

What I've heard is:

Linden Lab is working on a successor to SL

The lion's share of LL's development resources are working on the new SL now

Only a small team has been left to support SL

The new world will be closed source, and not backward compatible with SL

I've been a resident and creator in SL for 9 years, and if things I've built and paid for can't be moved to the new SL, it will be a disaster. Will there be some sort of compensation plan??

And as for the average long-term user, who wants to be buying 9 years worth of stuff they've spent money on all over again?? Clothes, gadgets, structures ... And all that land and the fees for all that land!!!

People have invested millions of Lindens in their SL lives. Will it all go "poof"? Say it ain't so ...

Sincerely,

"Shoeless" (lost my alpha mask) Jo Jira

Dear Jo -

Sadly, I can't say it ain't so. You have a fortune and thousands of hours tied up in a "virtual world?" But didn't you realize all along that it all could be gone in a flash? Just like in the "real world," but with even less fanfare? And unlike the real world, you won't have any physical debris - - for example, a foreclosed house - - to remember it by or prove you'd ever been there. Hopefully, you've taken some piccies.

So, you probably risked only what you could easily afford to lose, right? Haha ... Prolly not, if you've been in it for the long haul, like moi. You COULD just take the easy way out, but believe me, hun, it's not worth it. They're putting a net under that bridge anyway.

long time residents is, however, VERY interesting. But nobody at LL has mentioned it, that I know of. On the upside, if I must start over from scratch, at least I'll be able to find stuff in inventory again.

So what is the source of these rumors anyway? There was a Third Party Developer Meeting on June 20th that featured Ebbe (Altberg) Linden, the new Head Honcho, who mentioned plans for the future. I've listened to the entire two-hour meeting (YouTube video 7ShoXupxXw). From what was said, I was not able to draw FIRM conclusions about much of anything, except that there would be a new platform not constrained by the old one.

At the next meeting of the group,

On the upside, if I must start over from scratch, at least I'll be able to find stuff in inventory again.

I've been a resident since '07 and, if the 69K things I've paid for aren't going to be moved to the next generation of SL, it'll be a major loss. The idea of compensation in New World currency for

which took place on July 18th, the issue was not revisited. Fortunately, however, LL sent a clarification about the new virtual world it's building to Wagner Au at *New World Notes*. This message

follows:

"Linden Lab is working on a next generation virtual world that will be in the spirit of Second Life, an open world where users have incredible power to create anything they can imagine and content creators are king. This is a significant focus for Linden Lab, and we are actively hiring to help with this ambitious effort. We believe that there is a massive opportunity ahead to carry on the spirit of Second Life while leveraging the significant technological advancements that have occurred since its creation, as well as our unparalleled experience as the provider of the most successful user-created virtual world ever.

"The next generation virtual world will go far beyond what is possible with Second Life, and we don't want to constrain our development by setting backward compatibility with Second Life as an absolute requirement from the start. That doesn't mean you necessarily won't be able to bring parts of your Second Life over, just that our priority in building the next generation platform is to create an incredible experience and enable stunningly high-quality creativity, rather than ensuring that everything could work seamlessly with everything created over Second Life's 11-year history.

"Does this mean we're giving up on

Second Life?

"Absolutely not. It is thanks to the Second Life community that our virtual world today is without question the best there is, and after 11 years, we certainly have no intention of abandoning our users, nor the virtual world they continually fill with their astounding creativity. Second Life has many years ahead of it, and in addition to improvements and new developments specifically for Second Life, we think that much of the work we do for the next generation project will also be beneficial for Second Life. It's still very early days for this new project, and as we forge ahead in creating the next generation virtual world, we'll share as much as we can.

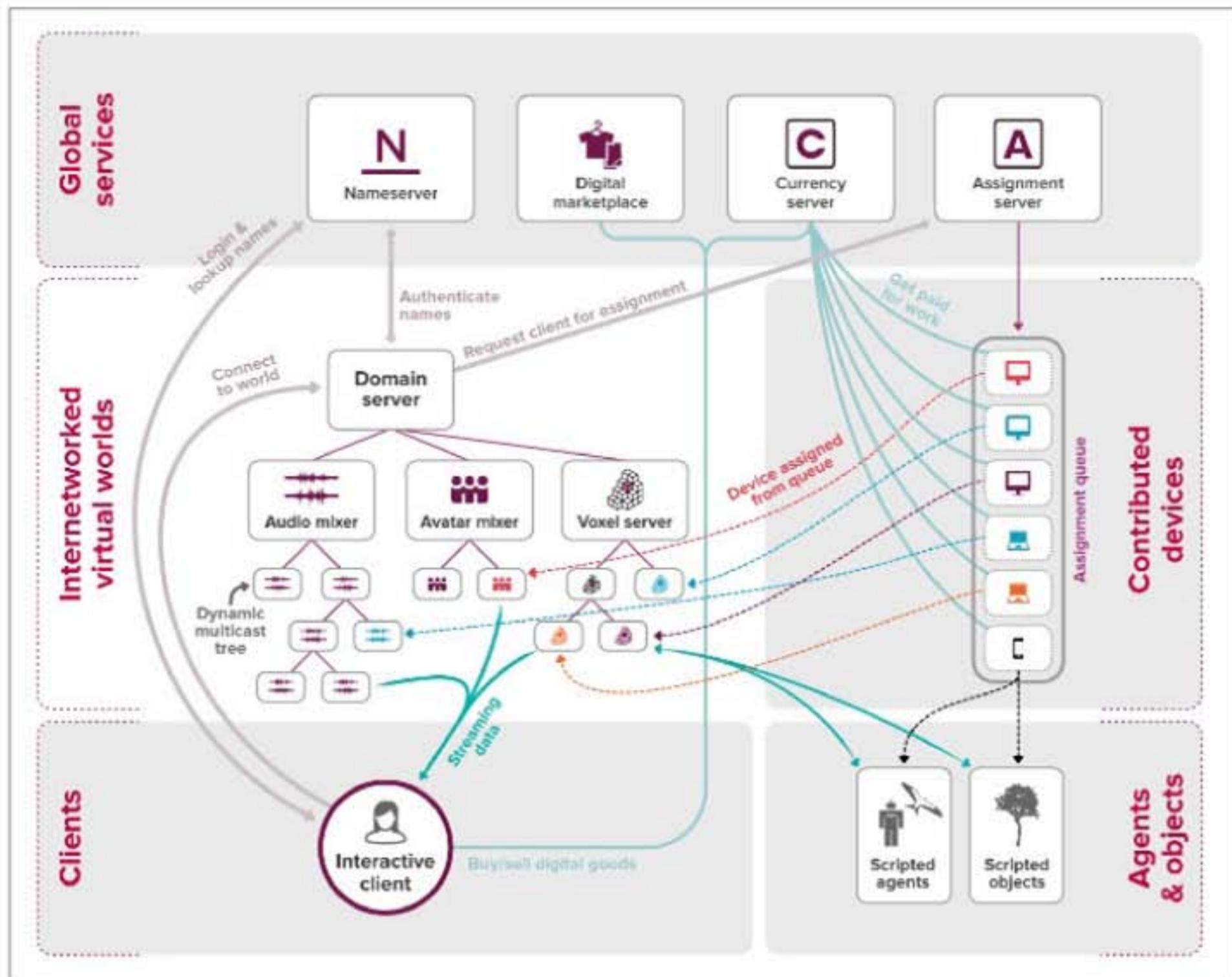
"If we had one message to share with Second Life users about this new project at this point, it would be: don't panic, get excited! Again, Second Life isn't going away, nor are we ceasing our work to improve it. But, we're also working on something that we think will truly fulfill the promise of virtual worlds that few people understand as well as Second Life users."

Well, that settles that ... NOT. But for sure, many things are going on in the realm of virtual reality. For example, what are Philip Rosedale and all those ex-Lindens doing at *High Fidelity*? Ummm ... creating a virtual world? He

even has a diagram of how it works:

different people and institutions to de-

High Fidelity System Architecture



His plan, as portrayed in the simple diagram above, “is to create the software and protocols enabling VR to reach the scale of today’s consumer internet. *High Fidelity* will allow many

ploy virtual world servers, interconnecting those servers so that people and digital objects can travel among them, and harnessing shared computing devices to scale their content and

load. When used with the new display and input devices coming to market, *High Fidelity* will enable a planetary-scale virtual space with room for billions of people, served by billions of computers."

Cool diagram -- everything should now be crystal clear :-) If you need it explained further, look here:

<https://highfidelity.io/blog/2014/04/high-fidelity-system-architecture/>

Anyway, it's potentially a competing virtual world, and supposedly it already exists on some level. That is enough reason for LL to man its battle stations; if it doesn't, someone else will. As far as I know, Ebbe hasn't yet got a neat chart like Phil's, so I guess LL may be behind, but both are hiring and plan to roll out betas next year.

In addition, *Facebook* not only bought *Oculus Rift*, but they have announced that they're building a virtual world with user-generated content and a mar-

Up until now, SL has really had no competition. Its verisimilitude is unsurpassed, as are its complex society, economy, and community.

If you need still further explanation, or if you actually understand it and want to chat, or if you need a job, call Phil.

The problem is, when you boil this grand vision down to a prototype, it is crude. It's not that it isn't technically solvable -- it just doesn't seem comfortably technically solvable.

ketplace. Well, that's scary ... I thought *Facebook* was real world. But I guess not, considering how many SL residents hang there.

It's still the early days for *Oculus Rift* and other experimental hardware. LL is providing *Oculus Rift* support in that they have a beta viewer that supports it. Their *Rift* support includes automatic

hardware detection and display calibration, and there are no limitations on what a user can do inworld while using the headset. The First-Person View allows users to enjoy the immersion previously available with mouse look mode (ummm ... LOL).



Strap on your *Oculus Rift* virtual reality goggles and your *PrioVR* harness. The goggles are like mouse look with your head in a box, and the harness doesn't

contribute a feeling of reality as far as I can see. But, it must be said that the harness can provide some real opportunities for exercise that you might otherwise be sadly lacking.

Up until now, SL has really had no competition. Its verisimilitude is unsurpassed, as are its complex society, economy, and community. Over the past several years, many virtual worlds have failed simply because they've only managed to attract early adopters, and those users had to give up the complexity of SL that made it so appealing in the first place.

SL generates about \$75 million in annual revenue. It has about 1 million active members monthly, and sees about 400,000 new visitors each month. It also maintains its own \$3.2 billion economy of in-world virtual goods sales.* It's fairly obvious that most of LL's revenue comes from land fees, probably 96 percent. If SL wants to maintain this income stream, it must come up with something attractive to its customers that will keep them in SL and/or want to move to the new SL.

Without financial disincentives, residents will think twice about going someplace where no one will know their name, where no one will recognize their avatar, where they won't have any money, and where their inventory will be empty.

Identity and content transfer are HUGE issues for people in Second Life, whether they hold land or not.

In a year or two, there may be something better out there. If SL wants to keep its customers, it would do well to ensure that users are incentivized to maintain their land holdings, are able to move at least the more modern of their goodies, and can keep their identities.

Don't worry, be happy.

TC - - Gudrun

*SFGate interview with former LL CEO Rod Humble. LL stopped publishing quarterly or annual Second Life economy reports :=P

(NB ~ Those who want to pore over SL's economic metrics in detail should immerse themselves in Tyche Shepherd's *Grid Survey* at <http://gridsurvey.com/>)

• r — e — z •



Go World!

by Zymony Guyot



I am so digging your progress.

This Age of Rage, our Digital Egos soothed

Our logic smoothed, our Point-and-Click web-slick

paste-it-and-see-if-it-sticks arguments proved

I was getting tired of face-to-face

This insanely moderate pace, Where simple acts of human grace

Were clogging up the queue

There was a time when I owned a phone

and not the other way around

when my highways weren't so digital

and my feet could still feel the ground.

But things were going way too slow, I crave much faster than I know

I want much farther than I need and never having to concede

That there are other mouths to feed. These windows I can close.

God and Google knows...

Not enough now-now-now drive-by-typeit-pow and too much maybe

Summarize it baby, time is money in this

gigabyte of Milk and Honey and I don't have the bandwidth for your life's story

Just a status update in all its pixelated glory

There was a time when slow was right
and not the plight of systems down
and words were their own magnificent light
not LOLed and OMGed into the ground

But Attaboy Earth!
Your Infomarkets never close
Ya snooze, ya lose to those who knows
The buy and sell spread on the news...what we choose
How we lose our breath and soul, the living wholly in our shoes
You aimed too high, but don't be bitter
What you had for breakfast don't matter in life...only in Twitter
Too many profiles and complications, Too many applications
For new nations, teen sensations and radio stations

And we the dying, dusty souls of brick and mortar
And our achingly antique "Give No Quarter"
With fires in the hearth, but no webcams on the border
It's a Cliff Notes world, no sense in cryin
If your life ain't a box score by now, you just ain't tryin.

There was a time when electrons weren't our fate
Where passion mattered, bits and bytes could wait
And music came from wood and wind and wire
And lyrics from that soul's eternal fire

But we're beyond modern, we're Something 4.0
And well beyond the possible understanding
of what we think we know we think we know
We've crowdsourced crowds and outsourced in
wargamed our doubts and what could have been
what should have been... our numbers leave us short
and go too far conceding life as is
Bet we could still be everything our obituary thinks we are.

And Bravo Planet! You've somehow turned, Dammit
Into the lusty lyrical verb we sing
When silicon-made collides with flesh we bring
And still we confuse having what we want
With having everything

There was a world where days and daydreams meet
I guess I just should shut up and take my seat

Yeah....Go World.

wulf carlucci

I know they die. We die.
It has been with me my whole life.
I recall when I became aware of death.
the horror of the realization
there is an end waiting for me.
Heaven was small comfort to a child
who had to grapple with when.
Life's rationalizations slowly
take the edge off and hide the wait
behind the mundane until someone
close vanishes and the vacuum stands
vacant until shy memories stand and speak.
I am grateful for the memories
still. I never expect them to end.

Ben M.



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